The Vigenere cipher is a plain-text form of encoding that uses alphabetical substitution to encode text. This ancient form of cryptography dates back to the 1400s and was documented in the works of famous writers of the era such as Trithemius. The Vigenere cipher, like other contemporary cryptographic ciphers, uses something called a tabula recta, a grid of alphabetic characters where encoders can shift lines for alphabetic substitution.